

# KEEP SERVING FAITHFULLY

Leader pages on pp. 152-155

**THE POINT:**  
SERVE CHRIST FAITHFULLY AS YOU WAIT FOR HIS RETURN.

## MATTHEW 24:42-51

<sup>42</sup> “Therefore be alert, since you don’t know what day your Lord is coming.

<sup>43</sup> But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into.

<sup>44</sup> This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

.....

<sup>45</sup> Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give them food at the proper time?

+  
+  
+

**MEMORY VERSE**

**<sup>46</sup> Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he comes.**

<sup>47</sup> Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

.....

<sup>48</sup> But if that wicked servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delayed,’

<sup>49</sup> and starts to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards,

<sup>50</sup> that servant’s master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know.

<sup>51</sup> He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

**KEYWORDS**

**Son of Man (v. 44)**—Jesus’ favorite Old Testament title for Himself. The Jews understood that He was making an audacious claim of messianic authority and to deity.

**Doing his job when he comes (v. 46)**—Jesus is telling us we must faithfully carry on while He

is gone. The vision is of an employee that carries on even while his boss is out of town.

**Cut him to pieces (v. 51)**—This probably means to be unmercifully thrashed with a whip.

## HOW SHOULD WE SERVE AS WE WAIT FOR CHRIST'S RETURN?

The clock said 13:19 in the third quarter, and the Houston Oilers were so far ahead of the Buffalo Bills (35-3) that the fans began streaming out of the stadium. It was January 3, 1993 in Buffalo, New York, so why stick around and watch your team get trounced?

But the game was not over. In less than seven minutes, the Bills had scored 27 points, coming within four points of the Oilers. But the game was still not over. A tie put them in overtime, and the Buffalo Bills ended the game winning 41-38.<sup>31</sup>

"It ain't over 'til it's over." Lenny Kravtiz recorded his famous song in the early 1990's as a cry for relationship.<sup>32</sup> It ain't over, 'til it's over. Anyone who has been in a relationship knows the feeling. The relationship is not over until each person throws in the towel on hope.

For followers of Christ, "It ain't over 'til it's over" applies to the return of Christ. We are called to serve Him and continue serving Him until He calls us home.

### Stay Alert // Matthew 24:42-44

My son currently plays T-ball. I will say, he is a world class all-star tee-ball player. One day during practice my husband kept telling him, "Keep your head on a swivel." As a four-year-old, my son did not know what that meant. My husband went to our son and said "look both ways all the time." How does a four-year-old respond? He constantly moved his head left to right until he made himself dizzy. While it brings laughter, that is the principle Jesus is calling us to as His disciples—to constantly be on the lookout—yet unlike my son, with focus. To keep our heads on a swivel in prayer, intercession, and anticipation of His return. Jesus says it like this: "Be Alert" (v. 42).

Verse 42 is the central turning point in Jesus' Olivet Discourse. The message is clear: people living prior to Christ's return must be ready for His coming, or, "be alert." It is a call for continual expectancy. Why? Being alert is a constant present activity because as Jesus told us in verse 36, "you don't know what day



## **THE POINT: SERVE CHRIST FAITHFULLY AS YOU WAIT FOR HIS RETURN.**

your Lord is coming.” Christ essentially repeats the truth of the uncertain timing of the Lord’s coming. We read earlier in verse 36: “Now concerning that day and hour no one knows—neither the angels of heaven nor the Son—except the Father alone.” Jesus also said He will return “at an hour you do not expect” (v. 44). This is a way of saying that not only will Christ return at a time that is concealed from us, but it will also be at a time that seems least likely. It is like the adage, “When you least expect it, expect it.”

Jesus compared His return to a thief in the night. A thief does not send a letter saying when he is stopping by to rob a house. A thief surprises you. Because of this, the homeowner must be prepared at all times just in case, similar to a security system. Jesus was referring to that “surprise” element when He compared His return to a thief’s arrival. Just like the burglar, Jesus will not advertise the time of His arrival. Of course, that would be the extent of Christ’s similarity to a thief. A thief steals what is not his; Jesus will return to claim that which is His own.

### **HOW CAN AN UNEXPECTED THIEF CHALLENGE US TO BUILD ALERTNESS IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES?**

## **Remain Faithful // Matthew 24:45-47**

Beyond readiness for Christ’s return is the essential addition of being faithful until Christ returns. Christ continues to use language or practices that the community was using to experience, in this case, slavery. Don’t lose me here! Slavery in this time was not exactly the same as what happened to our ancestors in America (see Did You Know?). Jesus uses this institution to teach that a good servant is one who remains faithful at all times, even if the master is not watching. For us as Christ followers, we are His servants. We are commanded to remain faithful.

This picture that Jesus’ paints of a wise and faithful servant and the need for readiness challenges us to be found doing what we are called to do at the time of Christ’s return. The believer’s life, breath, energy, and gifts are trusts from God to be used in His service. Faithfulness is a vital concept throughout Scripture.



## **DIGGING DEEPER NECESSARY READINESS**

Within verses 43-44 is a brief parable illustrating the importance of readiness at all times. It contains only two main characters and therefore probably makes only two main points: (1) People must constantly be ready for the possible return of Christ, since (2) He might come at any time and catch some off guard. Jesus’ point in comparing Himself with a thief is limited. He is not depicting Himself as a lawbreaker but stressing how unexpected and unpleasant His return will be for those not prepared for it. Each of us is like an owner of the house who is about to be robbed. Not only are we unaware of the time of the robber’s coming, but we don’t even know we are a target. If the ignorance persists, it represents the ignorance of a person who fails to heed Jesus’ warning about the future.

### **What prevents us from not being ready for the return of Christ?**

- “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected” (Luke 12:48).
- “It is required that managers be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).
- “Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

The servant in this parable is no ordinary one. Often a well-to-do household had a servant who was a manager, overseeing the master’s estate and his other servants. Such a high-level servant could oversee giving rations to other servants if the master were not present. Part of what God entrusts to us is the “stewardship” of others’ lives and the responsibility to selflessly love others. “Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Christ called us to be faithful with whatever He has entrusted to us.

The master is certain to return at some point. A wise servant maintains the character of readiness and faithfulness to the task in front of him. As a result, the master will entrust his faithful servant with all his possessions because the servant was faithful with some of his possessions. Whether we think we’ve been given much or little, we are to use what He has given us for the sake of His kingdom. What He has entrusted to us is His. Therefore, we are to use it as He would want it to be used.

The reward for faithfulness in the responsibilities we’ve been given is more responsibility! “Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions” (v. 47). There is great joy that accompanies such responsibilities. In the parable of the talents, those who were given more, those put in charge of many things, were told they would “share your master’s joy” (25:21). May we be found faithful to the work of God.

## WHAT AREAS OF YOUR FAITH-WALK ARE REQUIRING MORE FAITHFULNESS?



## Don’t Live for Yourself //

### Matthew 24:48-51

“Be Humble. Sit down.” Kendrick Lamar in his song a few years ago screamed this sentiment.<sup>33</sup> Jesus concludes this discourse by contrasting the faithful servant to the wicked servant. While the faithful servant aimed to be ready for the master’s return, the wicked servant took his chances, assuming the master would come later. The thinking of the wicked servant emboldened him to think, “My master is delayed” (v. 48). That led to selfish acts and abuse to others. Such a person “starts to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards” (v. 49).

## WHAT ARE SOME OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT US FROM FAITHFULLY SERVING JESUS?

During the end times, unbelievers will remain openly rebellious against God. Regardless of the signs of Christ’s return, some who do not believe will care nothing for God’s truth.

## THE POINT: SERVE CHRIST FAITHFULLY AS YOU WAIT FOR HIS RETURN.

Some may be aware of their lost condition, but they will assume they still have time to focus on their interests before Christ comes to judge.

Because the wicked servant is not a true believer, Christ assigned this servant to judgment and hell. While the word “hell” is not used in this verse, the concept is present. To “cut him to pieces” (vs. 51) means to cut a person in two, a form of judgment used regularly in ancient times. The image pictures severe judgment.

Hell is an uncomfortable subject, but we cannot deny its place in God’s Word. We must acknowledge that judgment, condemnation, and punishment await those outside of a relationship with Christ. With that acknowledgment, though, should come a desire and motivation to point people to Christ. As His servants, one of our tasks is to proclaim the gospel and point unsaved people to the hope, grace, and salvation found only in Christ. Let’s do that while we can because none of us knows exactly when Christ will return. Once He returns, our opportunity to share Christ will be gone—and so will their opportunity to accept Him.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Throughout this text Jesus uses the word “servant” or “slave.” The Greek word used is the word *dulos*, adapted in our English language is the word *doula*. A Duolos was not picture of a slave we saw in America’s history, rather this duolos often had a different story in their connection to their household.<sup>34</sup> In some cases of war, when a particular side lost, the reward for keeping one’s life was to serve in the homes of the winning nation. Many times these servants were managers, overseeing an estate and other servants. Over time, the words slave and servant have been used to oppress and hurt. Seeing Scripture in its context helps us to see how Christ wants us to steward our lives. Sin made this practice harmful.

### How does this outlook on slavery help frame how you view slavery in Scripture?

## LIVE IT

### How can you fulfill the duty to serve this week?

Consider Paul when he wrote, “Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Our love and obedient service for Christ can lead others to be prepared for His return. Christ called us to be faithful with whatever He has entrusted to us. May you be challenged and equipped to do the work of Christ with radical faithfulness and joy. Consider doing the following as you serve:

+ + +

**Support through prayer.** Commit to pray specifically and regularly for a ministry in your church or your city that shares the gospel and serves people in the name of Christ.

**Build others up.** Reach out to someone you see serving Christ faithfully and encourage that person in the work he or she is doing. Consider sending a note or taking the individual out for coffee.

**Invest your resources.** What do you have that you can use to serve others? Who can you help financially? Where can you invest your free time? Make a plan to share these blessings.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE // JOHN 10:10

“But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into” (Matt. 24:43). We are to remain alert and monitor what is going on around us. We are not to let down our guard by living contrary to the Word of God. When everything is going well and seems safe, it can become difficult to remain vigilant. We are under constant surveillance. Taking the focus off of God and letting our guard down leaves us vulnerable to being robbed of Christ and His blessings.

**“A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.”**

## 2. ARE YOU FAITHFUL? // LUKE 19:17

What does it mean to be faithful? Dedicated. Loyal. We often think about faithfulness in relationships like that of a husband and wife, which is a commitment based on an intimate union. If one is separated from the other for a time, the expectation is for each to remain loyal. As believers we are in union with Christ and have a committed, intimate relationship with Him. Fidelity is essential. Therefore we should remain devoted to God's Word and to His ways. And, we must remain unwavering with sharing the gift of salvation with others. Yes, as we await Christ, the Bridegroom's return, remain faithful.

**Endeavor to remain faithful until the Bridegroom returns.**

## 3. ABOUT BUSINESS // LUKE 2:50

Jesus' earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, found Him in the temple after He had gone missing. Jesus was 12 years old at the time. When questioned about what He was doing, Jesus replied, “Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?” (Other translations say, “about my Father's

business.”) We too must be about our Father's business; teaching the Word of God, helping the needy, comforting and loving others. Being about our Father's business means being guided by Him in our everyday actions, it's fulfilling His plan in our lives. God's business is our business.

**Declare today that you will be about our Father's business!**

## 4. FAITHFUL AND FULL OF FAITH // 1 SAMUEL 2:9

When processing how the end times will unfold, it is imperative that we are full of faith and faithful. Faith in God through Jesus Christ is the only way to live fearlessly. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Although we cannot visibly see God, our belief in His Word is what we have to cling to. It connects us to God and leads us to Christ's glorious reappearing. Remaining faithful and deepening our walk with Christ is also necessary, not just sometimes, but continually. Be faithful to God and Christ. Be faithful believing that God's Word is true and that He will bring all things to pass.

**“He guards the steps of his faithful ones.”**

## 5. GROW IN CHRIST // 2 PETER 3:18

Throughout the Bible the state of affairs prior to Christ's return is detailed. In 2 Peter, letters written by the apostle Paul were referenced. They foretell of how as the day of Christ nears, people will twist the Scriptures and the lawlessness that results may be difficult to understand. Believers are cautioned to be on guard and to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” “Grow” means to develop or to “progress to maturity.” We can do this by cultivating our relationship with God and Christ through worship, prayer, and studying and meditating on His Word.

**When we do our part to plant and water the seeds of faith, growth is inevitable, and we are truly able to flourish.**